



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brian Kavanagh

## Legislators, Local Officials, Tenants and Advocates Hold Press Rally to Support Rent Emergency Stabilization for Tenants Act S4659A/A4877A

BRIAN KAVANAGH May 28, 2025

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Legislation updates the process for localities other than New York City to declare a housing emergency and adopt critical tenant protections under the Emergency Tenant Protection Act (ETPA).

*Albany, NY* – State Senator Brian Kavanagh and Assemblymember Sarahana Shrestha were joined by State legislator colleagues, local government officials, tenants, and housing

advocates from Housing Justice for All, For the Many, and United Tenants of Albany at a press rally calling for passage of the ***Rent Emergency Stabilization for Tenants (REST) Act*** ([S4659/A4877](#)). The bill provides for an alternative method for localities other than New York City to opt in to rent regulation and expands the range of rental housing that can be covered.

Currently, localities must conduct a survey of rental housing they propose to regulate and demonstrate that the vacancy rate is below 5%. This bill leaves that option in place, but creates an alternative method whereby local governments would be able to consider a variety of factors in declaring a housing emergency and use publicly available data, rather than conducting their own vacancy survey. The bill would also allow localities to choose to regulate housing units in buildings with fewer than the current minimum of six units. Finally, the bill would provide that in localities would be able to provide for rent regulation in buildings built or substantially rehabbed more than 15 years ago; currently under the Emergency Tenant Protection Act (ETPA), buildings built after 1974 are exempt unless they are regulated pursuant to another law or regulation.

The ETPA in its current form extends rent stabilization to buildings with six or more units, an easy threshold to reach in high-density New York City where multifamily residential buildings are more common. Recognizing that the mix of housing varies widely across the state, this legislation would allow localities to set a lower building size threshold for rent stabilization coverage if they choose.

Since its introduction in February, the REST Act has gained 18 Assembly sponsors and 12 Senate sponsors, and has received the backing of over 30 local electeds who signed a letter of support for the bill. Additionally, the upstate cities of Albany, Hudson, Kingston, Newburgh, and Poughkeepsie have passed memorializing resolutions calling on state lawmakers to pass the REST Act, demonstrating widespread local support for expanding tenant protections.

“The housing crisis isn’t confined to New York City – it’s hurting families and individuals in every corner of our state,” **said Senator Kavanagh, Chair of the Senate Housing Committee and lead sponsor of the legislation in the Senate.** “The REST Act gives localities the tools they need to take decisive action by declaring housing emergencies and adopting tenant protections that reflect their communities’ realities. Whether it’s rising rents, displacement, or a severe lack of affordable housing, this bill ensures that upstate and suburban towns can respond with the urgency this crisis demands. Every New Yorker deserves a stable, affordable, accessible place to call home, and with the REST Act, we’re giving more localities the opportunity to adopt laws that will help make that possible.”

**Assemblymember Shrestha said:** “New York is the only state to require a vacancy study to declare a housing emergency. As we have heard from cities like Kingston, Poughkeepsie, Newburgh, and Hudson that passed a memorializing resolution in support of the Rest Act, we need to give localities the power they need to protect their constituents from exorbitant rent increases, and not limit them by requiring an unnecessary study.”

**Senator April Baskin said:** “Buffalo is facing a housing crisis that can’t be solved with a one-size-fits-all approach. While rents soar and families are pushed out of their neighborhoods, the current law forces cities like ours to jump through hoops just to prove what we already know – that tenants need protection now. The REST Act removes these roadblocks, allowing us to use real data on evictions, homelessness, and rent burdens to take action. This is about fairness, stability, and giving Western New York the power to keep our communities intact. I urge my colleagues to stand with tenants and pass this critical legislation.”

**Senator Rachel May said:** “As rental costs continue to rise without any end in sight, it is crucial that we find more solutions to help working families trapped in this ongoing cycle of increasing rent prices. This bill provides municipalities with another valuable tool to help keep housing affordable for working families.”

“Our residents know and are experiencing first hand skyrocketing rents that continue to push too many families to the brink,” **said State Senator Lea Webb**. “In Binghamton and across the Southern Tier, we need tools to help stabilize neighborhoods and stop displacement, especially in underserved areas that are often overlooked. The REST Act rises to this moment by empowering local governments to address their specific housing challenges, whether it’s a lack of affordable homes or unchecked rent hikes. I thank my legislative colleagues and support passing this bill to give every community a fair shot at keeping families safe, stable, and housed.”

**Senator Liz Krueger said:** “The housing affordability crisis is the number one issue for so many New Yorkers in every part of our state. We need to be doing everything we can, pulling on every lever, to ease that burden for our constituents. The REST Act creates necessary flexibility for municipalities to address the conditions they are seeing on the ground, rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all approach statewide. I thank Sen. Kavanagh and Assm. Shrestha for their leadership on this issue.”

**Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal said:** “New York State’s housing crisis can be measured in a number of ways but right now localities outside of New York City can only adopt rent stabilization by declaring a housing emergency if their rental housing vacancy rate is less than 5%. Passing the REST Act will change that by allowing a wider range of publicly available data to be considered, including eviction rate, homeless shelter population, and renters’ housing cost burdens, when declaring a housing emergency. Doing so would reflect the reality that there is not just one way to demonstrate a lack of housing availability, affordability, and stability and, in turn, make it easier for more local governments to adopt rent stabilization so that their residents will not be priced out of their homes.”

**Senator Robert Jackson said:** “No tenant should be denied protection because of their zip code—or held hostage by a statistic. The REST Act is about power: power for local

communities to respond to crisis, and power for renters to remain in the homes they love. From Albany to the Bronx, Kingston to Queens, the threat of displacement is real—and rent justice must be just as real. This bill cuts through red tape and restores what's been denied for too long: the right to stability, dignity, and self-determination. I'm proud to stand with my colleagues and with every New Yorker demanding a future rooted in fairness. Let's pass the REST Act—and meet this crisis with the courage it demands.”

**Cea Weaver, Coalition Director of Housing Justice for All, said:** “In every part of the state, tenants are struggling to pay the bills as rents skyrocket. Meanwhile landlords are buying sports cars and vacation homes with our rent money. We must expand rent stabilization: a time tested solution to make rent affordable. Tenants are half the state – and it's time our housing policy reflected that.”

“It's unacceptable that upstate communities face such substantial burdens to opting into rent stabilization and protecting tenants. Thousands of working class households are paying the price for the real estate industry's greed each year while local lawmakers have too few options to stabilize housing costs,” **said Brahvan Ranga, Political Director at For the Many.**

“Upstate towns and cities need more options than the vacancy study in order to declare a housing emergency and opt into ETPA. Local lawmakers should be empowered to define for themselves what buildings are covered so more tenants are protected. The REST Act addresses both of these issues and would give every municipality in the state the tools to protect tenants and keep their communities affordable. If legislators are serious about addressing the cost of living crisis, they must pass the REST Act this session.”

“New York's housing crisis is undeniable. Nowhere is that clearer than Albany, where skyrocketing rents and widespread displacement are everyday realities,” **said Canyon Ryan, Executive Director of United Tenants of Albany.** “But, despite a clear and urgent need for rent stabilization, our city was blocked from opting into ETPA because of an outdated vacancy

rate formula that fails to capture the extent of this emergency. The REST Act would finally give cities like Albany the tools we need to respond to the housing crisis and enact real protections for tenants. Lawmakers must pass this bill so that all New York communities—not just those that meet an arbitrary statistic—can fight back against displacement and keep rents affordable.”

“When I was diagnosed with cancer, I didn’t know how I’d manage treatment and pay my bills. But because my apartment is rent stabilized, I could afford to keep a roof over my head. In that respect, rent stabilization helped save my life,” **said Amanda Treasure, a Kingston rent stabilized tenant and member of For the Many.** “Every New Yorker deserves that kind of security. The REST Act would ensure more people have the stability we should all be able to count on.”

**Kingston Common Council Alder Michele Hirsch said:** “Rent stabilization has given Kingston tenants crucial protections from rapidly rising rents and displacement, but ETPA currently leaves out 80% of the renters in our city. We need a version of rent stabilization that protects more tenants and isn’t dependent on expensive, inaccurate vacancy studies that landlords love to attack. The REST Act is an opportunity to expand these protections to more tenants statewide and safeguard them from being rolled back.”

**Poughkeepsie Common Council Member Evan Menist said:** “When Poughkeepsie took steps to opt into ETPA and establish rent stabilization, a group of wealthy landlords weaponized the courts to protect their profits. They used deceptive tactics, false claims, and legal technicalities to invalidate our vacancy study — a bureaucratic and outdated process that forces cities to waste taxpayer dollars on red tape. These landlords are using lawfare to keep jacking up rents without improving their properties, while families across our city struggle to stay housed. We don’t need a vacancy study to know we’re in a housing crisis. The REST Act is a common-sense reform that would empower municipalities like ours to act — using real-

world data and local experience — to protect both tenants and homeowners from this growing emergency.”

**City of Hudson Mayor Kamal Johnson said:** “Hudson has seen rents soar while wages stay flat, and yet, despite the urgent need, we were unable to enact rent stabilization because of ETPA’s vacancy rate threshold. We can’t address the current crisis with a law that hasn’t been updated in 50 years. The REST Act is the fix that cities like Hudson need, so we can respond to the housing emergency with better data, without outdated studies standing in the way. Our communities can’t wait any longer.”

**Araceli, Yonkers resident and member of Make the Road New York, said:** “As a single mother with four children, every day I worry that our rent will skyrocket and our family will be displaced. If the four-unit house I live in had rent stabilization, it would allow us to live in a safe place with more stable rent. The REST Act will allow municipalities to expand rent stabilization to address the cost of living, and support long-term housing stability for families like mine.”

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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## 2025-S4659

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- Introduced
  - - In Committee Assembly

- In Committee Senate
- ◦ On Floor Calendar Assembly
- On Floor Calendar Senate
- ◦ Passed Assembly
- Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
- 

Relates to enacting the rent emergency stabilization for tenants act on local determinations of a housing emergency

February 10, 2025

In Senate Committee **Housing, Construction and Community Development**

Sponsored by **Brian Kavanagh**

Do you support this bill?